

Time to roll-up for flu shot

Cases of influenza may increase as restrictions ease

26 April 2021 – Sydney: Australians are being urged to book their annual influenza vaccination in the coming weeks to help reduce the threat of a rebound influenza season this winter.

A nationwide survey commissioned by Sanofi Pasteur reveals that one-in-four Australians feel they do not need to get vaccinated against influenza this year due to increased hand hygiene and social distancing measures.¹

The results of this survey indicate that up to 5 million adult Australians may not seek vaccination against influenza in 2021.¹

Professor Terry Nolan AO, clinical and public health specialist, Head of Vaccine and Immunisation Research at The Peter Doherty Institute, University of Melbourne stressed this is not the year to be complacent about influenza.

“Influenza vaccination is particularly important this season, with low infection rates last year² meaning there is a potential for lower than typical herd protection,” said Professor Nolan.

Lockdowns, strict social distancing and hygiene measures contributed to a record low number of notified influenza cases in 2020.² However, with an easing of these restrictions, “it would be fair to expect more influenza cases this year,” he said.

“In fact, we have seen something of a [yoyo-effect in influenza cases](#) in Australia in recent years, with relatively low rates one year (such as 2016 and 2018) followed by high rates the next (2017 and 2019).²

“It’s logical that with fewer people infected last year, there is less herd protection going forward. So, it’s possible that the recent pattern could continue, and we may see a rebound flu season in 2021.

“We certainly can’t turn a blind eye to influenza this year,” Professor Nolan stressed.

On a positive note, 68% of respondents to the survey agreed that living through the recent pandemic had increased their sense of responsibility to be vaccinated against serious preventable infections, such as influenza.¹

“Let’s hope that community confidence in the benefits and safety of flu vaccine outweighs any perceived barriers to vaccination ahead of the influenza season,” Professor Nolan added.

He said that the majority of Australians should receive influenza vaccination in the coming weeks, “well before the onset of the peak influenza season”.³

“The simple message is that unless you are booked in to receive a COVID-19 vaccine in the next 14 days, you can see a doctor or pharmacist for influenza vaccination,” he said.

“We cannot forget that influenza infection can be life-threatening.

“No matter your age or health status, steering clear of influenza is a top priority at this time of year. It’s important that Australians take advantage of the available protections in the coming weeks and get vaccinated to help protect themselves and those around them.”

Dr Iris Depaz, Medical Director at Sanofi Pasteur ANZ, said “As one of the world’s largest producers of vaccines, we are playing our part to ensure that supply meets demand this influenza season.”

Sanofi Pasteur has increased its supply of influenza vaccines to Australia this year to meet demand.

“With vaccines, we can diminish the threat posed by influenza to Australians of all ages,” she said.

“Living through a pandemic has certainly heightened community awareness of the value of vaccines and the need for vaccination to help protect against infectious diseases.”

This year, influenza vaccines available in Australia will contain the following strains of influenza virus: A/Victoria/2570/2019 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus, an A/Hong Kong/2671/2019 (H3N2)-like virus, a B/Washington/02/2019-like (B/Victoria lineage) virus, and a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like (B/Yamagata lineage) virus.⁴

The Federal Government provides free influenza vaccinations through the National Immunisation Program to children aged between 6 months and 5 years, those aged 65 and over, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, pregnant women, and people living with health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and severe asthma that place them at high risk of complications.⁵

For further information regarding influenza and vaccination, speak with a healthcare professional or visit: www.vaccinehub.com.au/disease/influenza

The nationwide survey was conducted between 23rd to 30th March 2021 amongst a representative sample of 1,005 adults. The survey did not include people who oppose vaccination.¹

About Sanofi

Sanofi is dedicated to supporting people through their health challenges. We are a global biopharmaceutical company focused on human health. We prevent illness with vaccines, provide innovative treatments to fight pain and ease suffering. We stand by the few who suffer from rare diseases and the millions with long-term chronic conditions.

With more than 100,000 people in 100 countries, Sanofi is transforming scientific innovation into healthcare solutions around the globe.

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